UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
LIMITED

A/C.3/49/L.19
15 November 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-ninth session
THIRD COMMITTEE
Agenda item 99

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS

Ghana*: draft resolution

Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 48/118 of 20 December 1993,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General 1/ and the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2/

Bearing in mind that most of the affected countries are least developed countries,

Convinced of the necessity to strengthen the capacity within the United Nations system for the implementation and overall coordination of relief programmes for refugees, returnees and displaced persons,

Welcoming the prospects for voluntary repatriation and durable solutions across the continent,

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* On behalf of States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of African States.

1/ A/49/578.

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 12 and addendum (A/49/12 and Add.1).

Recognizing the need for States to create conditions conducive to the prevention of flows of refugees and displaced persons and to voluntary repatriation,

Bearing in mind that the majority of refugees and displaced persons are women and children,

Noting with deep gratitude the readiness and willingness with which States members of the Organization of African Unity have always received refugees and displaced persons in spite of the economic difficulties facing most African States,

Realizing the importance of assisting the host countries, in particular those countries that have been hosting refugees for a long time, to remedy environmental deterioration and the negative effects on public services and the development process,

Recognizing the mandate of the High Commissioner to protect and assist refugees and returnees and the catalytic role she plays, together with the international community and development agencies, in addressing the broader issues of development relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons,

Bearing in mind the necessity of facilitating the work of humanitarian organizations, in particular the supply of food, medicine and health care to refugees, returnees and displaced persons, deploring acts of aggression against personnel of humanitarian organizations, particularly those that have led to the loss of life, and stressing the need to guarantee the safety of the personnel of those organizations,

Deeply concerned about the continuing critical humanitarian situation in African countries, in particular in the Horn of Africa, caused by persistent drought, conflict and population movements,

Conscious of the situation of the refugees, returnees and displaced persons in east, west, central and southern Africa,

Welcoming regional efforts, such as the mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution established by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity at its twenty-ninth ordinary session, held at Cairo from 28 to 30 June 1993, 3/

Taking into account resolution CM/Res.1521 (LX) on refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa, adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity at its sixtieth ordinary session, held at Tunis from 6 to 11 June 1994, 4/

3/ See A/48/322, annex II.

4/ See A/49/313, annex I.

Deeply concerned by the massive presence of refugees and externally displaced persons in Djibouti, which represents 25 per cent of the total population of the country, and by their uninterrupted influx owing to the tragic situation in Somalia,

Deeply concerned also by the serious consequences of the presence of refugees and externally displaced persons for the already difficult economic and social situation in Djibouti, which is suffering from prolonged drought and the negative effects of the critical situation in the Horn of Africa,

Recognizing that more than half of the refugees and externally displaced persons in Djibouti are located in Djibouti City in most serious difficulties and without direct international assistance, exerting intolerable pressure on the limited resources of the country and the social infrastructure and causing, in particular, serious problems of security,

Also recognizing the need for cooperation between the Government of Djibouti and the High Commissioner and relevant organizations to find alternative solutions to the problem of refugees in Djibouti City and to mobilize the necessary external assistance to meet their specific needs,

Aware that the refugee population in the refugee camps throughout Djibouti is in a precarious situation, facing the threat of famine, malnutrition and disease, and that it needs adequate external assistance for the provision of foodstuff, medical assistance and the necessary infrastructure for shelter,

Also aware that Eritrea has been devastated by a thirty-year war, which ended in May 1991, and repeated droughts over the years, that its economy and resources have been destroyed and that it is starting anew,

Recognizing the massive task facing Eritrea of repatriating over half a million refugees, particularly from the Sudan, through its programme for refugee reintegration and rehabilitation of resettlement areas in Eritrea, and resettling voluntary returnees already in the country, internally displaced persons and demobilized former combatants, and the enormous burden that they have placed on the Government of Eritrea,

Recognizing also the need for cooperation between the Government of Eritrea and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat and relevant organizations in order to mobilize the necessary international assistance to put the programmes of human resettlement into action in Eritrea,

Deeply concerned about the massive presence of refugees, voluntary returnees, displaced persons and demobilized soldiers in Ethiopia and the enormous burden that this has placed on the infrastructure and meagre resources of the country,

Deeply concerned also about the grave consequences this has entailed for Ethiopia's capability to grapple with the effects of the prolonged drought and to rebuild the country's economy,

Aware of the heavy burden placed on the Government of Ethiopia and of the need for immediate and adequate assistance to refugees, voluntary returnees, displaced persons, demobilized soldiers and victims of natural disasters,

Deeply concerned about the burden that has been placed on the Government and people of Kenya because of the influx of refugees fleeing the strife in some neighbouring countries and the infiltration of armed bandits and highly dangerous illegal weapons from the situation obtaining in Somalia,

Aware of the need to improve the security situation in the region, particularly in the border areas, for the safety of the refugees, local community and personnel involved in humanitarian activities,

Recognizing the great contribution and sacrifices that the Government of Kenya has made and continues to make in dealing with this situation,

Emphasizing the importance and necessity of continuing assistance to the refugees in Kenya, estimated to number more than two hundred and seventy thousand, until such time as this situation has changed,

Deeply concerned about the tragic impact that the civil war in Somalia continues to have on the lives of its people, affecting four to five million people who are either refugees in neighbouring countries or internally displaced and are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance,

Aware that the voluntary repatriation of large numbers of Somali refugees in neighbouring countries and elsewhere, as well as the return of internally displaced persons to their original homes, will still require a planned and integrated international assistance programme designed to cover their basic needs, ensure adequate reception arrangements and facilitate their smooth integration into their respective communities,

Convinced that it is necessary that humanitarian assistance to Somali refugees, returnees and displaced persons be mobilized urgently and delivered without delay in view of the deteriorating situation of the displaced persons and returnees and the mounting pressure the refugees continue to place on the host countries,

Appealing to the Somalis to implement the Addis Ababa Agreement on national reconciliation that the Somali leaders signed on 27 March 1993 in order to create an environment conducive to the repatriation of Somali refugees from the neighbouring countries,

Recognizing that the Sudan has been hosting large numbers of refugees over an extended period of time,

Aware of the economic difficulties facing the Government of the Sudan, and the need for adequate assistance for the refugees and displaced persons in the Sudan and the rehabilitation of the areas affected by their presence,

Commending the Government of the Sudan and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the efforts they have undertaken for the voluntary repatriation of the large numbers of refugees to their homelands,

Deeply concerned about the plight of Sudanese refugee children, particularly the problem of unaccompanied minors, and emphasizing the need for their protection, well-being and reunification with their families,

Considering that the repatriation and reintegration of returnees and the relocation of displaced persons are aggravated by natural disasters and that the process poses serious humanitarian, social and economic problems for the Government of Chad,

Cognizant of the appeal to Member States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to continue to provide the necessary assistance to the Government of Chad to alleviate its problems and improve its abilities to implement the programme of repatriation, reintegration and relocation of voluntary returnees and displaced persons,

Noting with appreciation the continuing efforts of the Economic Community of West African States and the Organization of African Unity to restore peace, security and stability in Liberia, and the signing at Cotonou, Benin, on 25 July 1993 of the peace agreement between the Interim Government of National Unity of Liberia, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia and the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy, 5/ as well as the establishment of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia, aimed at bringing an end to the conflict,

Deeply concerned about the influx of internally displaced persons, returnees and refugees to Monrovia and the enormous burden this has placed on the infrastructure and fragile economy of the country,

Also deeply concerned that, despite the efforts made to provide the necessary material and financial assistance for the refugees, returnees and displaced persons, the situation remains unsettled and has serious implications for the long-term national development of Liberia, as well as for those west African countries hosting Liberian refugees,

Bearing in mind the continuing need to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to Liberian refugees, returnees and displaced persons, since the security situation is not yet propitious for the conduct of large-scale voluntary repatriation and reintegration,

Deeply concerned about the influx of refugees into Burundi, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zaire following the recent crisis in Rwanda;

Considering the alarming situation of internally displaced persons in Burundi and Rwanda,

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5/ S/26272, annex.

Emphasizing the need for structured and coordinated action by all parties to assist the Government of Rwanda in the rehabilitation, reconstruction and normalization of civil society in that country and to complement the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees related to repatriation,

Welcoming the ongoing repatriation programmes for refugees in some southern African countries,

Convinced that, because of the serious economic situation arising from the effects of devastating and persistent drought in southern Africa and the impact on some countries in the region of hosting large numbers of refugees, there is a continuing need for the international community to extend maximum and concerted assistance to the southern African countries sheltering refugees, returnees and displaced persons,

Welcoming with appreciation the ongoing activities of the High Commissioner for the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of South African returnees,

Recognizing the need to integrate refugee-related development projects in local and national development plans,

1. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General and the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;

2. Commends the Governments concerned for their sacrifices, for providing assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and for their efforts to promote voluntary repatriation and other measures taken in order to find appropriate and lasting solutions;

3. Expresses deep concern at the serious and far-reaching consequences of the presence of large numbers of refugees and displaced persons in the countries concerned and the implications for the security environment and their long-term socio-economic development;

4. Expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner, the specialized agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, donor countries and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations for their assistance in mitigating the plight of the large number of refugees, returnees and displaced persons;

5. Expresses the hope that additional resources will be made available for general refugee programmes to keep pace with refugee needs;

6. Expresses its gratitude to the international community for the humanitarian assistance it has continued to render to refugees and displaced persons and to the countries of asylum, and calls upon it to continue to provide assistance to the millions of refugees and displaced persons in Africa;

7. Calls upon Governments, United Nations organizations, non-governmental organizations and the international community as a whole to strengthen the emergency response capacity of the Office of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees on the basis of the experience of the emergency in Rwanda, and to continue providing needed resources and operational support to assist Rwandese refugees and the host countries until a permanent solution can be implemented;

8. Also calls upon the international donor community to provide material and financial assistance for the implementation of programmes intended for the rehabilitation of the environment and infrastructure in areas affected by refugees in countries of asylum;

9. Further calls upon Member States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to continue to provide the necessary support and financial assistance to the High Commissioner to enhance her capacities and abilities to implement emergency operations, care and maintenance activities, and repatriation and reintegration programmes for the benefit of refugees, returnees and, as appropriate, certain groups of internally displaced persons;

10. Appeals to Member States and international and non-governmental organizations to provide adequate financial, material and technical assistance for relief and rehabilitation programmes for the large number of refugees, voluntary returnees and displaced persons and victims of natural disasters and to the affected countries;

11. Requests all Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to pay particular attention to meeting the special needs of refugee women and children;

12. Calls upon the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat and United Nations humanitarian organizations to continue their efforts to mobilize humanitarian assistance for the relief, repatriation, rehabilitation and resettlement of refugees, returnees and displaced persons, including those refugees in urban areas;

13. Requests the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to mobilize adequate financial and material assistance for the full implementation of present and future projects in rural and urban areas affected by the presence of refugees, returnees and displaced persons;

14. Requests the High Commissioner to continue her efforts with the appropriate United Nations organizations, the Organization of African Unity and intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organizations to consolidate and increase essential services to refugees, returnees and displaced persons;

15. Also requests the High Commissioner to review her general programmes in Africa, taking into account the increasing requirements in that region,

16. Requests the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive and consolidated report on the situation of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, under the item entitled "Report of the High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating

to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions", and an oral report to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1995.